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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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~ Crime Alerts in Boston ~ McAfee Launches Beta! ~ CD Writer Suite 4!
~ Windows Live Messenger ~ Naked World Cup Worm! ~ "Immortal 3" CD!

-* New Xandros Linux Desktop! *-
-* MySpace Faces Sex Predator Lawsuit! *-
-* Symantec Tests New Web-Security Service! *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard

"Saying it like it is!"

My commentary last week wasn't meant to be prophesying, honest. However, I guess my comments bore truth. As a result of extremely limited messages in the Atari newsgroups this past week, Joe's "People Are Talking" column will not appear in this week's issue (and hence the "teaser" change above!). I'm really surprised that too often this has occurred this past year. Then again, perhaps I'm being too optimistic in thinking that the Atari userbase is still fanatical (in a good way!) about its choice of computing power.

Well, I'm throwing out the gauntlet! I know there are faithful Atari users who are out there on comp.sys.atari.st and other Atari newsgroups. I know that many of you have a lot to say; perhaps there isn't enough activity for you to be active. In that case, perhaps you have your own personal views, or recommendations, or memory that you'd like to share with our readers. Have you ever been a "closet writer" but never had an outlet for your thoughts? Well, here's your chance!! Drop us a line with your idea, and we'll go from there. C'mon, there are lots of people waiting to hear what you have to say. Be the first on your block to appear in print!

Meanwhile, I'm getting ready for a likely rain-soaked golf tournament this weekend. Unless there's lightning, I have a feeling that we're going to be wet out on the course!! Well, it won't be the first time that I've played in rain, so I guess it will be fun as long as it isn't a constant downpour.

My outdoor yard work is almost complete, at least as far as the major projects are concerned. Soon I can focus on the smaller projects - the "fun" ones that aren't back-breaking! And more opportunities to get out on the golf course!

Until next time...

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CD Writer Suite v4 Available

Anodyne Software has released version 4 of CD Writer Suite. Version 4 supports both CD and DVD recording, among other features. For more information, please see our web site at: <http://www.anodynesoftware.com>

Roger Burrows & Claude Labelle

"Immortal 3" CD Released

"Immortal 3", a double CD album presenting more than 150 minutes of the best game music arrangements from classic Atari ST/ Amiga games, is released by producer Jan Zottmann. Most of the tracks have been arranged by the original artists.

Jochen Hippel, known in the Atari scene as "Mad Max", presents a "Wings of Death" medley with a playtime of nearly 8 minutes, based on the music he did for Thalion's famous Atari ST/E shoot 'em up.

Besides, Jochen Hippel rearranged a track from Thalion's Amberstar. Ambermoon, Amberstar, "No Second Prize" and "Wings of Death" - all these Thalion games are featured on the "Immortal 3".

Other tunes making you turn up the volume of your cd-player are based on (but not limited to): Turrican II + III, Fire & Ice, Lotus 3, Speedball 2, Ghouls 'n Ghosts...and an orchestral interpretation of the Apidya main title.

"Immortal 3" is available from Synsoniq Records for 24,95 Euro. For a complete tracklist and ordering information visit the Synsoniq-homepage at:

URL: <http://www.synsoniq.de/productdetails.php?pid=567>

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
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[Editor's note: Due to the lack of activity in the Atari newsgroups this past week, there will be no column this week.]

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Nintendo Updates 'Mario'!
***** Louisiana Joins Battle...
...and Gets Smacked Down!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Nintendo Updates 'Mario Bros.' With A New Bag of Tricks

Icons and legends get reinvented all the time - Batman, Madonna, the Rolling Stones come to mind.

Now, the plumber's time has come.

In 1985, "Super Mario Bros." for the Nintendo Entertainment System bounced into our lives and changed everything.

VIDEO GAME REVIEW: NEW SUPER MARIOS BROS.

Publisher: Nintendo

Rated: E for Everyone

Platform: Nintendo DS

Rating: 3 1/2 stars out of 4

For lots of people, it's what started the journey into full-fledged gamerhood. Large worlds to explore, enemies to overcome, that distinctive music - for a long time, this WAS video gaming.

More than 20 years later, a new generation gets to see what the big deal was.

Enter "New Super Mario Bros." for the Nintendo DS, a game sparkling with the magic of an earlier era while showing off some new tricks for one of gaming's oldest legends.

Fans of the series will relish the game's visual presentation. It's a classic, 2D side-scroller, which means all you can do is move left and right on the screen. All of the characters and levels attack the eyes with happy, lush colors and move with fluidity, reminiscent of Mario's later incarnations on the Super Nintendo.

Gameplay is old-school simple. Back in the NES days, you only used two buttons on the controller (plus the directional cross) to play.

Things haven't changed. All you really need to do is move and jump, which means people who have never played a game in their lives can pick up "New Mario" in only a few minutes.

No matter what level you are, the experience of playing the game feels more important than actually trying to beat it. There's plenty of nostalgic stuff the fans will enjoy, but the game is bursting with loads of new content that'll win the intrepid plumber a legion of new followers.

In the old games, Mario and Luigi grabbed mushrooms and flower power-ups that would make them grow in size and give them the ability to chuck fireballs at the enemy.

There's a slew of new power-ups, including:

- A Super Mushroom that turns Mario into a giant, giving him the ability to bulldoze through enemies and walls;
- A blue mushroom that makes Mario tiny, which grants him access to smaller pipes that lead to hidden areas. Mini Mario also has Jordan-esque hangtime when he jumps, and he can run on water.
- A power-up that puts Mario in a protective shell, which also lets him slide around and bowl over the bad guys.

As if that wasn't enough, Mario has apparently been doing some yoga - now he can flip, jump off walls like a ninja and use a butt-drop to crush his foes. Kids will like that one.

The top screen of the DS is where the action is, as well as a world map (reminiscent of "Super Mario World"), where players can chart their journey to rescue the princess, who's been abducted by Bowser Jr.

Along the way, you can pick new areas to explore as well as use Star Coins (another new feature) to "buy" access to other areas. You can also "store" an extra power-up that can be accessed on the touch screen whenever you need it.

As fun as this game can be, the hardcore gamer would consider it a breeze. You're set for life when you obtain the ability to launch fireballs, and you'll be able to literally torch through the game in a few dedicated sittings. There's extra lives and power-ups galore, so there's never any sense of imminent danger when you play.

However, given the multitude of extra goodies and worlds, "New Super Mario Bros." is the kind of game you can go through more than once without it ever feeling repetitive. It's a great way to introduce a legend into the lives of a new audience, and it'll remind a lot of older players why they got into games in the first place.

Louisiana Joins Battle Over Violent Video Games

Louisiana is the newest front in the ongoing political and legal battle over violent content in video games, which in the United States drive a \$13 billion industry that rivals Hollywood box office sales.

Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco on Thursday signed legislation that bans the sale or rental of violent video games to children under the age of 18. Under the law, violators would face fines of up to \$2,000, one year in prison, or both.

The Entertainment Software Association (ESA) and the Entertainment Merchants Association on Friday filed suit in the Federal District Court of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to overturn the new law, saying similar laws have been struck down by six courts in five years.

"We are confident this bill will be found unconstitutional, as have similar statutes in other states," ESA President Doug Lowenstein said.

A representative for Blanco sent calls to the Louisiana attorney general's office, where a spokeswoman was not immediately available for comment.

Similar laws passed in California, Illinois and Michigan were found by federal judges to have violated free speech guarantees.

Stephen Smith, an attorney who represents a variety of video game companies, predicted that the industry would eventually prevail in the Louisiana case.

"Violent content is not a basis under the First Amendment to ban something," said Smith, a partner at Greenberg Glusker in Los Angeles.

Judge Puts Louisiana Video-game Law On Hold

A federal judge has granted a request by video-game industry groups for a temporary restraining order preventing the state of Louisiana from enforcing a new law that would ban sales of violent games to minors, according to court records obtained on Tuesday.

The ruling, issued by U.S District Court Judge James Brady on Friday, is the latest salvo in a heated battle over content turned out by the \$13 billion U.S. video-game industry.

Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco last week signed legislation banning the sale or rental of violent video games to children under the age of 18. Under the law, which was to take effect immediately, violators would face fines of up to \$2,000, or one year in prison, or both.

A hearing of the request by the Entertainment Software Association and the Entertainment Merchants Association for a preliminary injunction is scheduled for June 27 before the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana in Baton Rouge.

The industry groups sued to overturn Louisiana's new law, saying similar laws have been struck down by six courts in five years.

Federal judges in California, Illinois and Michigan have found that laws passed by those states violated free-speech guarantees.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

FTC Laptops Stolen, 110 People at Risk of ID Theft

The Federal Trade Commission, responsible for protecting Americans from fraud and identity theft, reported on Thursday the theft of two of its own computers with personal information about 110 people.

The incident was the latest in a series of recent thefts and data breaches involving government computers.

The Veterans Affairs Department said last month an external hard drive containing information on 26.5 million veterans was stolen. The Energy Department discovered personal information about 1,500 employees and contractors was compromised in a cyberattack, and the Agriculture Department said a hacker may have obtained data about 26,000 of its workers.

The FTC laptops belonged to staff attorneys who were using them to prepare an enforcement lawsuit, said Betsy Broder, the FTC assistant director for privacy and identity protection.

The computers, which were password-protected, contained names, addresses, Social Security numbers and some financial account numbers. The laptops were stolen from a locked vehicle last week.

"We wish this hadn't happened," Broder said. "No data security is perfect and we're going to use this as a way to improve our practices and security."

The FTC sent letters to the 110 individuals notifying them of the theft and offering one year of free credit monitoring.

The FTC is developing a new laptop computer security policy that would require an employee to remove any personal identifying information in the machine before it leaves an agency office. If the personal data was needed for an investigation, an FTC manager would have to approve allowing the laptop to leave the building, Broder said.

Senator Stevens Offers Deal On Net Neutrality

Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Ted Stevens has offered a compromise in the fierce fight over legislation on Internet network neutrality, but stopped short of demands sought by content companies like Google Inc.

Google, Microsoft Corp. and other Internet companies have lobbied hard for Congress to bar broadband Internet service providers such as AT&T Inc. and Comcast Corp. from charging them to guarantee access and service quality, often called network neutrality.

AT&T and Comcast, two of the largest high-speed broadband Internet providers, have opposed any obligations imposed on their services or restricting their business operations.

Stevens has added a new section to his proposed bill aimed at preserving consumers' ability to surf anywhere on the public Internet and use any Web-based application, according to the latest draft obtained by Reuters this weekend.

However, the draft by the Alaska Republican does not include a ban on pricing content companies have demanded.

Earlier versions of the bill only called for the Federal Communications Commission to report on Internet access, prompting Hawaii Sen. Daniel Inouye the top Democrat on the committee, and some others to call for more

protections.

Striking a compromise would likely make it easier for the bill to pass this year. AT&T and Verizon Communications want it to pass quickly because it would also make it easier for them to get licenses to offer cable television service.

The Senate committee is scheduled to consider amendments and vote on the measure at a meeting on Thursday. Spokesmen for Stevens and Inouye were not immediately available for comment.

Stevens' compromise would also create a complaint process through the FCC if consumers believe their access rights were violated and the agency would be authorized to adjudicate complaints with penalties, according to the draft.

However, the FCC would be barred from issuing any regulations under the new law that would add to the obligations on Internet service providers.

The compromise is somewhat similar to legislation that passed the House of Representatives. However, there are other differences between the House and Senate that would have to be resolved.

Broadband providers argue that they would not block any public Internet site or application but may want to offer private Internet-based services like for customers to download movies.

But content companies worry that will squeeze public Internet traffic into a narrower, slower lane.

Another new provision in the bill would require Internet providers to offer stand-alone service without forcing subscribers to sign up for other products, like voice or video services. Some companies already do so but charge more.

Senate Committee Chairman Says 'No' to Net Neutrality

Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, told eWEEK on June 22 that he does not want any sort of net neutrality legislation to be part of the telecom bill currently being debated by the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee.

"Until somebody tells me what net neutrality means, until they can give me a definition, I don't want it in there," Stevens said to eWEEK June 22.

"Right now, nobody knows what it means, so why put it in the bill?"

Stevens has previously said that he was opposed to legislation that would put common-carrier-like provisions into the bill. Earlier he told eWEEK, "The Internet should be free."

The committee held a markup session on Senate Bill 2686, the Communications, Consumers' Choice and Broadband Deployment Act of 2006 on the afternoon of June 22.

A markup session is when the Senate committee considers amendments to the current version of a bill before it goes before the full Senate for a vote.

The June 22 meeting was the first in what promises to be a long series of meetings extending over the course of several days or weeks.

The bulk of the debate was aimed at two areas: funding communications initiatives for the War on Terrorism and for VOIP (voice over IP) legislation.

Net neutrality, if it is considered at all, will not be debated before Tuesday, June 27. Only two events of substance took place at the June 22 markup session. The first was to adopt an amendment to accelerate the spending of money for interoperability solutions for first responders.

Also voted on today was an amendment to limit local regulation of VOIP services, and to preempt local and state limits on VOIP carrier operations, with the exception of consumer protection, child pornography or privacy laws.

The amendment, introduced by Sen. John Sununu, R-N.H., would prevent states from taxing interstate calls or raising financial barriers to entry for VOIP carriers.

A number of committee members expressed concerns about the need for net neutrality legislation in their opening statements.

While it's likely that committee members will have the chance to express their opinions on net neutrality, and to offer their thoughts on what it actually means, it's unlikely that any such provision will make it into the current bill.

The chairman of a Senate committee has great power to control the content of legislation, and it's highly unlikely that provisions a Senate committee chairman opposes will see the light of day.

However, the current version of the bill is notable in its bipartisan support.

Over the 18 months that the bill has been in process, members from both parties contributed.

"This is a product of all members from both sides of the aisle," Stevens said in his opening remarks.

Stevens noted that much of the bill's content was crafted by members from both sides, and a large number of amendments were incorporated by consensus.

Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., said that the committee should add a strong provision for net neutrality to ensure that Internet access is not subject to discrimination.

Sen. Olympia Snowe, R-Maine, said that any net neutrality provisions must protect the free, unfettered environment that has characterized the Internet to date.

A total of 216 amendments were introduced for inclusion into the Senate version of the bill. The U.S. House of Representatives has already passed a similar bill.

If the Senate version passes the full Senate, the two bills will be reconciled in a conference committee.

McAfee Launches Total Protection Beta

McAfee has launched the beta version of a new all-in-one security platform, originally codenamed Falcon, that is designed to compete with Microsoft's recently introduced Windows Live OneCare and a forthcoming security service from Symantec, called Norton 360.

The beta version of the software, called McAfee Total Protection, can be downloaded at <http://beta.mcafee.com>. Total Protection comes with all the bells and whistles that experienced computer users might expect, and some they might not.

The technology that forms the foundation of Total Protection includes a SystemGuards module, which monitors computers for specific behaviors that might signal virus, spyware, or hacker activity, and a module called X-Ray for Windows, which is designed to detect and eliminate rootkits.

The new SiteAdvisor tool is designed to identify potentially dangerous Web sites that contain spyware or adware. Findings are summarized with red, yellow, and green icons that provide users with an at-a-glance view of Web site ratings.

McAfee Total Protection also includes a Wi-Fi network monitor, a Windows clutter cleaner, and a backup tool for keeping important information safe.

Those participating in the beta program will have the opportunity to test a separate online backup service that is designed to preserve and protect digital photos and personal files, and provide users with access to these files from any secure Web connection.

When Total Protection is released, McAfee will roll out several additional software packages, each offering progressively fewer built-in options. These packages include McAfee PC Protection Plus, McAfee Internet Security Suite, and McAfee VirusScan Plus.

"McAfee's release of multiple levels is really smart," said Natalie Lambert, an analyst at Forrester Research. "More security savvy users will opt for the more advanced features, while typical consumers will choose the basic antivirus option McAfee provides."

Consumers will be "looking for a solution that meets their needs and their budget," she said. Industry reports not directly confirmed by McAfee have predicted that the pricing will range from \$39.99 for VirusScan Plus up to \$99 for Total Protection.

Symantec Tests New Web-Security Service

Symantec Corp. said on Wednesday the release of its new Web-based security service would depend on response to user trials and would be held back if required tweaks meant it would miss the key holiday period in the United States.

The firm said it would also announce details of its product, which aims to

give online users better protection from cyber criminals when paying bills and buying and selling over the Internet next week.

Symantec's president of consumer products, Enrique Salem, told Reuters the "Norton 360" service, aimed at bolstering the company's 62 percent share of the consumer security market, was currently scheduled for a fall release but could slip until the new year if the program was not up to scratch.

"We are all working toward a fall release but the most important thing in all this is the beta feedback," said Salem.

"We need to make sure we get it right and it's robust," he added.

Salem said the company needed to have the product on the shelves ahead of the key Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday period the North America or else wait until the new year.

"Once you get beyond mid-November in the U.S., retailers have already stocked their shelves so there is no point, (shipping the product) ... If that was the case we would probably wait."

"That is absolutely not the plan though. The plan is to ship in the fall," Salem added.

Last month, Microsoft began selling its Windows Live OneCare service targeting the fast-growing consumer security market.

Symantec, the world's biggest security software company, has countered with Norton 360 in an effort to fend off the software giant and target a growing market.

Salem also said the firm would unveil details of its yet-to-be-named transaction security offering on Monday, which it hopes will restore the public's wavering confidence in filling in personal and bank details online.

"53 percent of people have stopped giving information online and 14 percent have stopped paying bills online ... We think we have answered a lot of people's questions."

Salem said the product would provide a much better protection than existing offerings.

"Anyone can create a list (of bogus and fraudulent Web sites and e-mail addresses) but lots of new sites are created every day."

"This will be able to recognize the characteristics of these types of sites in real-time and it will also be able to authenticate sites so people can be sure they are actually on their bank's site," he added.

MySpace Bolsters Defenses, Faces Sex Predator Suit

MySpace.com, the top online teen hangout, said on Tuesday it will bolster protection for minors amid a flurry of complaints about sexual predators prowling the site and a lawsuit filed on Monday by a teenage girl charging it with negligent security practices.

By next week, members over 18 years old would have to know the e-mail or first and last name of any 14- to 15-year-old member whom they want to contact, the company said.

Any of MySpace's more than 85 million members would also be able to choose to hide their online profiles from strangers and only make them viewable to pre-approved friends, the company said.

"We're going to build a foundation of safety and security so that social networking is a safe place and a well-lit community," Hemanshu Nigam, chief security officer of News Corp. unit Fox Interactive Media, told Reuters.

A 14-year-old girl from Austin, Texas, on Monday sued MySpace and its owner, Rupert Murdoch's News Corp., for \$30 million, saying she was sexually assaulted by a 19-year-old man she met on the site.

The suit charges the company with failing to take enough precautions to protect minors from sexual predators.

MySpace said it was reviewing the lawsuit, and had for several months been developing safety measures that would make it more difficult for strangers to contact minors using the site.

The company is scheduled to present its plans on Thursday at an event sponsored by the National Center for Missing 580 million last year.

The purchase made Murdoch the toast of Wall Street at a time when rivals fretted about losing television viewers and newspapers readers to the Internet and video games.

But its early success has been tempered by reports of sexual predators on the prowl for children on the site. In March two men were arrested in Connecticut and charged with having illegal sexual contact with young girls - one 11 years old and the other 14 - they contacted through MySpace.

The minimum age for MySpace membership is 14, the company said, but the requirement is hard to enforce with existing technology, Nigam said.

The Texas suit "alleges that MySpace.com had full knowledge that sexual predators were contacting young children on the Web site but did nothing to stop it," according to a statement by law firm Barry & Loew LLP, which is representing the girl.

A News Corp. spokeswoman said the company had no immediate comment on the charges.

In response to the March attacks and subsequent public outcry, MySpace in May hired Nigam, a former prosecutor against Internet child exploitation at the U.S. Justice Department, to lead security efforts.

MySpace said its advertising policy will also be altered to target appropriate age groups. For instance, ads for mature online dating sites will not be presented to minors.

Microsoft Corp. launched on Monday its newly branded instant messaging system, Windows Live Messenger, the first major release in a wave of online services Microsoft plans to offer to grab a larger share of Web advertising revenue.

Microsoft's suite of Windows Live services, which includes e-mail, search, mapping and social networking, aims to unite the company's various Web programs under a unified brand and look so the world's largest software maker can better compete against Yahoo Inc. and Google Inc. in the growing online advertising market.

Windows Live Messenger builds on top of Microsoft's MSN Messenger - used by 240 million people worldwide - and offers free PC-to-PC calls, inexpensive calls to ordinary phones from the PC and video conferencing using Web cameras.

The messaging system has been in beta, or test mode since December 2005. Most of Microsoft's Windows Live services are still in the public testing stage, but the company said it plans to roll out more than 20 new Windows Live services over the next year.

It has earmarked \$1.1 billion of the company's total \$6.2 billion research and development budget in the coming fiscal year, starting July, for Windows Live and MSN.

"Windows Live is a huge growth opportunity for Microsoft. The online advertising opportunity will be a big growth driver for Microsoft in the coming years as the market continues to expand," said Martin Taylor, Microsoft corporate vice president for Windows Live and MSN marketing.

Other features of Windows Live Messenger include a sharing folder to more easily distribute photos or files to people on the user's contact list. Microsoft said it plans to integrate the new messenger with its other Windows Live services.

The messaging system also incorporates Windows Live Contacts, a feature that allows users to share and subscribe to their friends' contact list so details are always up to date.

Newest Opera Browser Takes a Bow

After long months of experimenting with the test version, fans of Opera will today be able to get their hands on the official Version 9 release of the popular Web browser that has several new bells and a few interesting whistles.

For one, Opera 9 includes widgets, which are small standalone applications. With widgets, a user can play games, retrieve specified data like stats about favorite sports teams, and perform other functions - all in slick-looking little windows that can be positioned on the screen independently of the browser.

Opera-based widgets are expected to blossom - if that's what widgets do - because they can be developed and distributed by members of the Opera community using open Web standards like JavaScript, CSS, HTML, and Ajax.

In addition to supporting widgets, Opera 9 features native support for

BitTorrent, a popular file-sharing technology for distributing movies and audio.

And, in a preview of a feature that will reportedly be found in upcoming versions of Internet Explorer and Firefox, the new Opera includes a security bar to warn users about phishing scams and other malicious sites.

Another notable feature is that users can specify whether to allow JavaScript on a site-by-site basis, rather than just turning it on and off.

They also can turn off ads on a site-by-site basis and, if they are in a redecorating mood, can add skins and buttons to change the look and feel of the browser.

Increasingly, browsers are providing functionality far beyond simply offering a window into the Web. Opera's support for widgets is in keeping with this trend.

Firefox, among others, might push this trend even further. There are reports that Firefox 3, the version after the next upcoming release, will allow browser-based applications to run even when the browser is offline.

In a move to embrace new platforms, Opera 9 supports what is called the Extensible Rendering Architecture (ERA), a set of standards to ensure that browsers can work with any Web-connected device - such as cell phones or video game machines.

Opera has plans to extend widgets to the new platforms as well. "Desktop users have already discovered the wonders of widgets," said Scott Hedrick, Opera's executive vice president. "Now it's time to bring them beyond the PC."

Some observers see such platform expansions as offering important growth opportunities for the browser.

"If Opera can leverage some of the wins it has had in the mobile space and the handheld gaming market, it can make some inroads against Microsoft, which currently owns the desktop," said Nicole d'Onofrio, an analyst with technology research firm Current Analysis.

"The key will be for Opera to partner with PC manufacturers and have Opera 9 preloaded on desktops," she noted.

New Xandros Linux Desktop Arrives

Xandros 4.0, the first new version of Xandros Inc.'s desktop Linux distribution in a year and a half, arrived on June 20. Xandros 4 is based on Debian Sarge Linux, with LSB (Linux Standard Base) improvements courtesy of the DCC Alliance's Common Core.

It also includes the KDE 3.42 desktop interface. If you want GNOME, you're looking at the wrong distribution. Xandros is very KDE-oriented.

For programs, it includes the newest editions of the KDE application family, Firefox, Thunderbird, and the OpenOffice.org 2.0 office suite.

This latest version of the first mass-market Linux desktop, the long-gone Corel Linux, has added a variety of features designed to make it a drop-in replacement for Windows.

One aspect of this is the inclusion of Paragon Software Group's NTFS for Linux. With this program, Xandros will be able to both read and, much more significantly, write to Windows's NTFS-formatted drives. NTFS has become the most popular Windows file system.

Xandros also makes things easy for Windows desktop users to migrate from XP, or other shipping Windows desktops, by incorporating Versora's Progression Desktop. This innovative program enables users to import their Windows settings, data, and files—including email, photos, and music—when moving from Windows to Xandros.

Xandros 4 also comes with CodeWeavers CrossOver Office bundled. This program enables users to run many popular Windows programs like Microsoft Office and Intuit Quicken.

MySpace To Expand to Other Countries

News Corp.'s Fox Interactive Group on Tuesday said it plans to expand its online music and teen hangout site, MySpace.com, to 11 countries and seek programming deals with traditional media companies.

MySpace, one of the fastest-growing Web properties, which News Corp. bought for \$580 million last year, plans to offer MySpace in France and Germany and also is looking into China and India over the long term, the company said.

News Corp did not identify the other countries.

The company launched its first web site outside the United States in Britain in April.

On Tuesday, MySpace said it has appointed David Fischer to be its managing director for the United Kingdom and Europe.

Before joining MySpace Fischer was the founder and the chief executive of Xlantic Group, an entertainment company that developed new business models in music marketing and production.

All Online Traffic May Not Be Equal

Market forces aren't enough to preserve the Internet's historical principle of treating all traffic equally, regardless of the content provider's wealth or clout, a high-tech advocacy group said Tuesday in announcing its support for legislation.

In a report, the Center for Democracy and Technology said consumer demand might very well create sufficient incentives for Internet service providers to treat all online sites and services equally.

"But that outcome is far from guaranteed," the Washington-based group

wrote. "CDT believes the risk is too great to simply 'wait and see.' Once new, non-neutral networks and business arrangements have been put in place, overturning those arrangements is likely to be extremely difficult."

At issue is the concept of "net neutrality," the idea that telephone, cable and other Internet providers shouldn't favor certain Web sites or services simply because they are willing to pay higher fees or make special arrangements to transmit data.

Phone and cable companies contend pure net neutrality would drive up costs to consumers because online businesses wouldn't pay a fair share of the billions of dollars being spent to provide high-speed service around the country.

Although they say they wouldn't block access to anyone, some Internet providers have proposed "tiered services," in which a company offering an Internet phone or video service could pay for higher priority to the network. That's important because voice and video offerings consume much bandwidth and rely on real-time delivery of data, so delays would be much more noticeable than if it were e-mail or a static Web page.

But critics say that with tiered services, those unable or unwilling to pay would essentially be left out.

The House earlier this month passed a broad telecommunications bill that would give the Federal Communications Commission authority to enforce net neutrality principles and set fines of up to \$500,000 for violations. Critics say that provision wasn't enough to maintain the Internet's freewheeling openness.

The Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee is scheduled to take up the issue Thursday.

The CDT said Tuesday that any legislation should be narrow and exempt, for now, any non-Internet services that may use the same pipes - for example, television services over regular phone lines.

CDT staff counsel John Morris said Internet providers still should be able to prioritize certain types of services, such as Internet phone calls, as long as the prioritization is offered to all companies equally, without prior arrangements or fees.

In a separate study released in conjunction with the CDT report, Daniel J. Weitzner, a principal research scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said nothing should preclude users from paying more for higher speeds.

"The freedom to buy the bandwidth that one can afford means that hundreds of millions of people around the world have been able to participate in the Internet even if not at high speed," Weitzner wrote. "These decisions are always up to the user, not the network operator or the content provider."

Cheaper PCs Coming Soon?

Users looking for a new PC might want to wait for a round of price cuts that are expected soon from Intel, the world's largest maker of microprocessors.

Component vendors and analysts in Taiwan say the company may announce such reductions in July, and the PC market has already slowed down in anticipation of the move. The microprocessor is one of the most expensive parts inside a PC, so price reductions could have a big impact on the price of an overall system.

Taiwanese companies often know inside information about the PC industry, such as about upcoming chip launches or price reductions, because they make many vital components for PCs and need to know about upcoming technical or business changes in order to prepare new products. Taiwanese companies hold over three quarters of the global market for computer motherboards.

Intel announced its most recent price reductions on June 4. It regularly updates its price lists because older processors usually fall in price as it introduces newer ones.

The company says it hasn't made any formal announcements about a price reduction in July. "There has been no announcement, but I believe everyone has speculated on that," said Nick Jacobs, a corporate communications manager for Intel in Singapore. Intel is often the subject of rumors and speculation, he noted.

Whether the current talk turns out to be real or speculation, it has caused demand for a host of PC components, including memory chips and LCD screen panels, to slow. That's because PC vendors don't want to have built up a backlog of PCs with more expensive processors if Intel is about to cut prices.

"Overall DRAM demand remains minimal, as PC demand has been postponed since Intel had foretold its July price reduction," said market researcher DRAMeXchange Technology, in a report on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, prices of LCD panels used in laptops and desktop monitors fell by 3 percent to 5 percent in the second half of June, according WitsView Technology.

A reduction in microprocessor prices could produce bargains for users looking for a new PC. Lower prices could allow PC makers to pass the savings directly on to users, or enable them to add more goodies to a PC, including more memory, a larger hard drive or a flat display screen, without increasing the price of the system.

Part of the reason people believe Intel will slash prices is due to stiff market competition with rival Advanced Micro Devices. The two companies have been in a pitched battle over the past year, with AMD gaining some market share on its rival and even winning a key new customer, Dell. The world's largest PC maker used to exclusively use Intel microprocessors, but recently announced it would use AMD processors in some servers.

Another reason Intel might cut prices would be to make way for its upcoming family of powerful and more energy-efficient Core 2 Duo microprocessors, said one component maker. As the company releases new microprocessors, it usually slashes prices on older models in order to clean out its inventories.

Soccer purists can breathe a sigh of relief: There is no Naked World Cup.

IT professionals, on the other hand, may want to be a little more vigilant, as a new e-mail worm is on the loose that preys on the intense worldwide interest in the international sporting event.

Called Sixem-A, the worm began circulating earlier this week, and has just recently been blocked by antivirus vendors. So far the worm has been detected at only a handful of companies, but it is the first World Cup 2006 malware to target an English-speaking audience, says Graham Cluley, a senior technology consultant with antiviral firm Sophos.

Victims receive messages with subjects like "Naked World Cup game set," or "Soccer fans killed five teens," and are encouraged to click on an e-mail attachment, which appears to be an image. In fact, this attachment is malicious software that disables antivirus products, attempts to download more malware, and also forwards itself to e-mail addresses saved on the victim's computer.

Malware has become an unsavory part of the World Cup tradition. In 1998, World Cup-themed malware wiped out hard drives; four years later the VBSChick-F virus tried to take advantage of the World Cup hosted in South Korea and Japan.

Scammers are already looking to score on the next World Cup, telling would-be victims that they've won a lottery connected with the 2010 event, to be held in South Africa, Cluley says.

Widespread interest in any topic creates opportunities for "social engineering" attacks, in which people are tricked into helping the attackers, says Cluley. "People are just as hungry to watch the games and get content as they are to get videos of Pamela Anderson or Paris Hilton," he says. "The bad guys have moved from nubile girls to fit young men."

World Cup fans have already seen malware disguised as a downloadable game plan and tickets for this year's event, which is being held in Germany.

Text Messaging Used as Malware Lure

Botnet herders have found a crafty new way to lure computer users to maliciously rigged Web sites-via text messaging on cell phones.

The latest social engineering trick is to send SMS (short messaging service) alerts to mobile phones with a warning that the target has subscribed to an online dating service that racked up expensive charges on cell phone bills.

The message includes a URL for the user to unsubscribe to avoid the \$2 per day charges.

According to a warning from anti-virus vendor CA, the URL points to a Web site rigged with Win32/Bambo.CF, a Trojan horse program used by identity thieves to hijack sensitive user information.

The fake dating Web site associated with the scam has been set to entice targets into entering the phone number. At this point, it attempts to load

an executable file called "unregister.exe."

Interestingly, the Web page does not attempt to exploit any software flaws. Instead, the attacker provides step-by-step instructions to click the "Run" button on each warning page, providing an easy way around the Internet Explorer security warning prompt.

For advice on how to secure your network and applications, as well as the latest security news, visit Ziff Davis Internet's Security IT Hub.

If the program is run, it installs the Trojan, CA said in its advisory.

At press time June 23, the malicious Web site was still active.

Websense Security Labs, a San Diego, Calif., malware research company, said the bot is a variant of Dumador, a back door that opens two ports and allows the computer to be remotely controlled by malicious hackers.

Dumador is controlled by a Web-based HTTP controller that is used to send commands to botnets.

A botnet is a collection of hijacked computers used to send spam or launch distributed denial-of-service attacks.

While bots are mostly controlled by IRC (Internet Relay Chat) channels, researchers at Websense say Web-based controllers have become popular with bots that are used to capture and transmit keylogger information and to store user data.

Crime Alerts at Your Fingertips in Boston

Phil Carver may never see the white Maxima stolen near his neighborhood, but the description e-mailed to him by the Boston Police Department will be in the back of his head when he goes for a walk with his kids.

Boston has become the latest - and largest - U.S. city to launch a crime alert system designed to get the word out about murders, bank robberies and other crimes to residents and businesses via e-mail, text messaging and fax.

"This is stuff I can tell my neighbors," Carver said. "At the very least it keeps people on their toes and aware of what's going on. The more people are aware and involved, the less crime you'll have."

Carver, who lives in Boston's Dorchester neighborhood, is among an estimated 1,000 people who have registered since early June shortly after the program was launched in Boston, which has seen a spike in crime over the past 18 months.

Alerts are sent not only about various violent crimes, but also about trends, such as car break-ins. Specific types of businesses, such as pizza shops, can be warned of robberies. Alerts also can be sent about fugitives and missing persons.

The program is designed to both disseminate and solicit information, at a time when prosecutors complain that witnesses too often remain quiet. The program allows anonymous tips.

"The idea of this is to close cases," said Joseph Porcelli, civilian community service officer with the Boston Police Department. "What gets sent out is information that the community needs to know, or can take action on."

The department's first alert was about a May 30 bank robbery in South Boston. A young woman wearing dark sunglasses and a Gap sweat shirt made off with an undetermined amount of cash.

An alert was sent after two men were fatally shot outside a Dorchester store on Wednesday afternoon. None of the cases have been solved, but officials say there are success stories in other cities using the technology.

Cincinnati, Fort Worth, Texas, and Durham, N.C., are among the nearly 300 communities and law enforcement agencies that use the system. The service is provided by Citizen Observer, a company based in St. Paul, Minnesota.

"A phone tree can take hours and days. This, you can get in a matter of seconds," said Sgt. Eric E. Franz, who runs the program for the Cincinnati Police Department and estimates he sends about three alerts per week.

An alert was sent shortly after a downtown Cincinnati bank was robbed in March. A clothing store owner received the alert on his cell phone, and called moments later.

"A guy had just left his business. He bought new clothing and paid with cash," Franz said of the bank robber, who was later arrested on a city bus.

That's the exception, not the norm, however. Franz estimates about a dozen crimes have been solved as a result of the 300 alerts they've issued in the past two years. Each alert generated about 100 calls from the public, he said.

Citizen Observer was created by Scott Roberts, who launched an Internet crusade in Minnesota six years ago leading to the arrest of a man who shot his mother. To receive alerts, users register for free at Citizen Observer's Web site.

The Boston program is being piloted in three neighborhoods: South Boston, Dorchester, and Roxbury. Mayor Thomas Menino said he wants to expand it to the whole city.

So far, Carver has received only two alerts. But Carver says the more chances he has to stay on top of crime, the better.

"As a father of three living in the city, any tool we can use to stay aware and spread information about crime is a good thing," said Carver, president of the Pope's Hill Neighborhood Association.

Boston Police Department: <http://www.cityofboston.gov/police>

Citizen Observer: <http://www.citizenobserver.com>

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